

# INVASION OF THE WEIRD TREES

*Volume 3*  
***The Freaks Return!***  
*2004 Edition*

# TREES....

....they come in all shapes and sizes. They fill the air with sweet, fragrant scents of spring blossoms, and splash the landscape with brilliant colors in the fall. They cool the air with their shade and provide a barrier against the harsh winter wind. They add beauty and comfort to our lives, as well as furnishing us with thousands of products we use every day.

But this booklet isn't about the beautiful trees, and it doesn't focus on the bounties of Mother Nature. It doesn't ask you to "thank a tree" for the oxygen you breathe, or "hug a tree" in an affectionate display of gratitude. Some of the creatures featured in this publication might evoke more fear than affection. In fact, the thought of hugging some of these freaks of nature might be downright repulsive.

Have you ever been driving down a road or walking in a woods when you've happened upon a tree that is just so unusual that you are compelled to stop and stare? Have you ever said to yourself, "I wish I had my camera to capture this on film."?

During the spring of 2000 and again in 2002 and 2004, many Hoosiers took to the outdoors to do just that--to capture on film what words alone could not describe. After receiving hundreds of entries, our District Foresters employed a critical eye, years of arboreal experience, and sometimes a slightly twisted sense of reality to select the "weirdest" tree for each county. The results of their selections are highlighted in this booklet. If a previous winner was compared to its new competition and again judged to be the "weirdest" for that county, it retained its dubious title.

If your county is not represented, or if you know of a tree that you think is more weird than the one shown for your county, get your camera tuned up and your hiking boots ready. The deadline to enter the next Weird Tree Search will be April 15, 2008.

And now, witness the Invasion (if you dare to proceed).....

\* denotes a tree that has retained its status as the "weirdest" in its county from the 2002 edition of "Invasion of the Weird Trees"



Double vision  
plagues home-  
owner

\*Adams county, submitted by  
Ruth Brown

Paul Bunyan's  
discarded pretzel  
found in Indiana  
woods

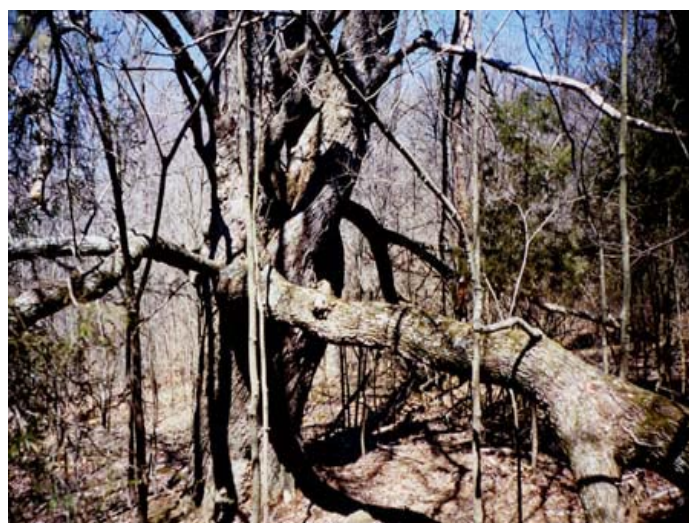


Allen county, submitted by  
Kathryn Moore



Benton county, submitted by  
Bonnie Dubich

Serpent in paradise  
no longer peddling  
apples



\*Bartholomew county, submitted by  
Mauri & Debra Young

Long arm of law  
works undercover





Blackford county, submitted by  
Bonnie Dubich

Starving tree down to  
bark and bone

Give me  
an “**h**”....



Brown county, submitted by  
Dave Mason



Boone county, submitted by John Artman

Loch Ness makes  
Hoosier appearance

Give me  
another “**H**”



Knox county,  
submitted by Gary Rodney Smith





Clark county, submitted by  
Amil Kleinert



Split personalities  
revealed



Vermillion county, submitted by  
Allen & Joyce Shew



Miami county, submitted by  
Harold McAlister



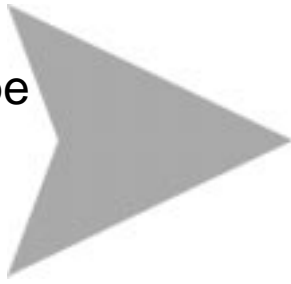
Who you callin'  
LUMPY?



\*Clay county, submitted by Cecil E. Raab



The Jack-alope  
tree



Clinton county, submitted by Nancy Martin



Tree shocked  
by its receding  
bark

\*Crawford county, submitted by  
Paul Harmon



Daviess county, submitted by Janet Gregory

Forest hijinx seen through  
secret keyhole



Tree survives by hook  
or by crook

Decatur county, submitted by Terry Wells



Reach out and  
touch someone

Tree forms bridge  
over troubled waters

\*DeKalb county, submitted by  
Sirleine M. Smith



\*Delaware county, submitted by Anson Tooley



\*Dubois county, submitted by  
Dwight E. Seal

Tree caught doing  
donuts in woods

Just a little off  
the top, please



\*Elkhart county, submitted by  
Sue A. Powell





Tree tells  
fish story

\*Fayette county, submitted by Donald Hollcroft

Unsightly warts  
blamed on  
tree toad



\*Floyd county, submitted by  
Natalie Pomeroy

Arboreal  
amour!



\*Fountain county, submitted by Don Bickel

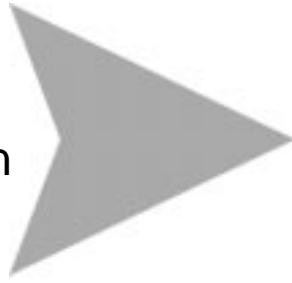
“Ugly duckling”  
aspires to be  
Christmas tree



\*Fulton county, submitted by Laura Snipes

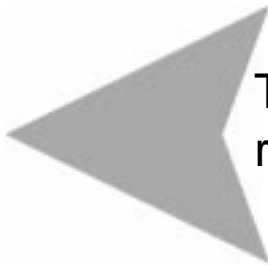


Lonely heart  
seeks companion



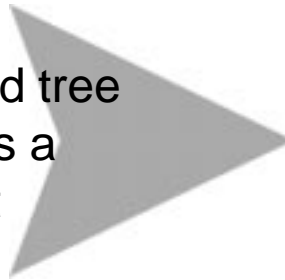
Gibson county, submitted by Kayce McCoy

Tree insists on  
right to bear arms



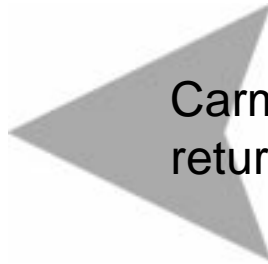
Grant county, submitted by Pat Eicher

Confused tree  
thinks it's a  
"P" plant



\* Hamilton county, submitted by  
Becky Mansmann

Carmen Miranda  
returns as tree

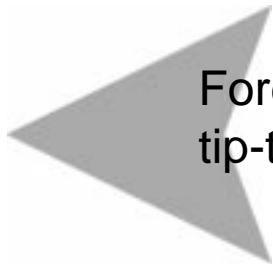


\*Greene county, submitted by  
Rick Morron

“Tree-in-a-can”  
latest craze



\*Hancock county, submitted by Kay I. Wall

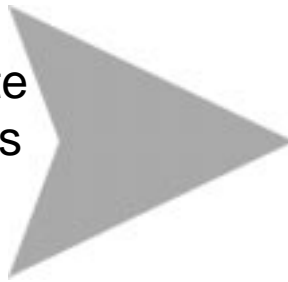


Forest giant caught  
tip-toeing through woods



\*Harrison county, submitted by Paul Harmon

Twist of fate  
unites trees



Hendricks county,  
submitted by Carol Ford



Sick sycamore's  
temperature skyrockets



Henry county, submitted by  
Marvin & Judith Webber



Old neighborhood  
terrorized by  
alien life form



\*Howard county, submitted by Chris Dimitt



Huntington county, submitted by Sheri Wilson

Farm implement requires  
“Slow Moving Vehicle” sign

Strange growth between  
fingers has arborists  
concerned



Jackson county, submitted by Linda L. Smith



Tree morphs into rhino!

Jasper county, submitted by Bernita Hagadon





Jay county, submitted by Bettie Jacobs

Tree found  
loafing on  
the job



\* Jennings county, submitted by  
Joe Spurlock

More split  
personalities  
discovered in  
the woods



Jefferson county, submitted by  
Mike Underwood

Searchers misled:  
needle found in  
woods, not  
haystack



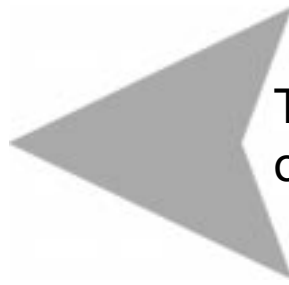
\* Johnson county, submitted by Linda Cummins

Looks like another  
lean year for  
this tree





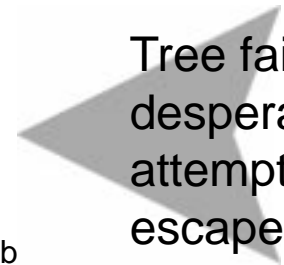
Kosciusko county, submitted by  
Dave & Joan Tyler



Tree spotted walking  
out of woods



\*Lagrange county, submitted b,  
Renee Harville



Tree fails in  
desperate  
attempt to  
escape woods



\*Laporte county, submitted by Richard Magiera



Child possesses  
mysterious  
tree-bending  
powers

Tree professes its honesty;  
Pinocchio is skeptical



\*Lawrence county, submitted by  
H.C. Cummings



Like father,  
like son



\* Marshall county, submitted by Harvey Firari

Tree anointed by  
shaggy dog  
undergoes  
transformation

Tree finds  
weening  
offspring  
difficult



Madison county, submitted by A. Wm. Heiman, Jr.



\*Marion county,  
submitted by Bill Howard

Other forest trees  
left out of the loop



Martin county,  
submitted by Bonnie Dubich





Monroe county, submitted by Carol Ritter

Tree-octopus hybrid  
has scientists scratch  
their heads

Trees unite after  
long separation



Morgan county, submitted by  
Ray DeBaets



\*Montgomery county, submitted by  
Wes Crawford

Confused  
tree sprouts  
elephant trunk

\*Newton county, submitted by  
Duane Datzman



Tree goes fishing, but  
line gets tangled





Tree flexes muscle  
for wildlife

Noble county, submitted by  
Richard D. Johnson



Oragne county, submitted by Jim Cassidy

Unusual lava flow  
comes from tree



Owen county,  
submitted by Dallas Kimmel

Tree tips  
scales of justice



Parke county,  
submitted by Karen Staub

Beech tree undergoes  
bonding experience





\*Pike county, submitted by Lu Froehle

More than corn  
grown in Indiana

Perry county, submitted by  
Sue Motz



Opened mouth, closed eyes--  
tree waits for big surprise

Mumps epidemic  
plagues trees



Porter county, submitted by  
Sherry Biddle

Wayward tree  
has parent  
concerned



\*Posey county, submitted by  
Jack Finck



\*Pulaski county, submitted by Steve Knebel

Enlarged hearts  
puts trees at risk



Putnam county, submitted by  
James & Melissa Ray

Scott county, submitted by Mr. Weber



Doctor listens for seedling  
heartbeat in expectant tree



\*Ripley county, submitted by Don Tolbert

Narcoleptic tree snoozes  
through first three decades



Petrified python  
discovered on  
Hoosier tree



\*St. Joseph county, submitted by  
Larry D. Enders

Spencer county, submitted by Bobby Joe Smith



Starke county, submitted by  
John D. & Mary Lou Smith



Trees make up for  
iron deficiency

Oh, Deer!!



Shelby county, submitted by Mary Spurgin





\*Sullivan county, submitted by Bruce Finkbiner

Foresters study  
poor posture  
in trees



\*Steuben county, submitted by Paul Beckwith

All-points  
bulletin issued  
for sign thief



Tippecanoe county, submitted by Sierra Boszer

Former home of toad has  
tree wondering wart to do

Guardian tree keeps  
watch on woods



Vanderburgh county, submitted by Bob Kessner





Warrick county, submitted by  
John & Linda Gray

Open Arms Hotel  
welcomes wildlife



Vigo county, submitted by Mary Jane Cooke

Chorus of trees  
perched to  
serenade  
park visitors

Tree found with antennae;  
neighbors report  
great reception



\*Wabash county, submitted by  
Danielle Jean Knable

Multiple  
personalities  
found in tree



Warren county,  
submitted by Bonnie Dubich



Troll tree hungers  
for old bridge

Washington county,  
submitted by D. Purlee

Tree's green  
seeks sunny side  
of street



\* Wayne county, submitted by  
Philip Coffman

Go IU!!!



Wells county, submitted by  
Charles Neuenschwander





\*Whitley county, submitted by  
Richard Zernack

Gang of crooks  
seen lurking  
in woods



\*White county, submitted by Eleanor L. Hickman

# They're Weird—But How Did They Get That Way?



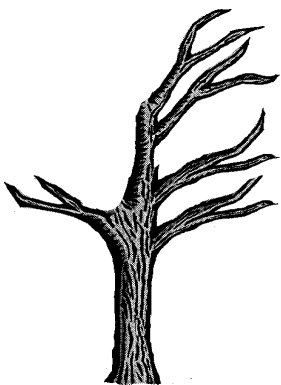
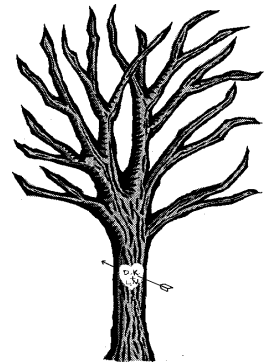
Science is founded upon explaining the unknown and making sense of the weird. But some freaks of nature even defy scientific explanation. The collection of weird trees displayed in this booklet provide a challenging exercise for modern investigators.

A team of highly trained and experienced DNR scientists agreed to examine these specimens and, if possible, determine the causes of their weirdness. Here are their findings:

## **SYMPTOM: Embedded object**

**DIAGNOSIS:** A common notion about trees is that an object fixed to the tree will get higher as the tree grows. That is not correct. Trees grow from the tips of the branches, and once something is attached to the tree, it will not get higher over time. It will, however, be eaten. Trees grow not only in height, but also in girth. As the tree grows in diameter, it also will “eat” or grow around any object fixed to the tree or even next to it. Hence, a nail placed into a tree when it is only a sapling will be “consumed” and be deep inside the trunk when that tree reaches maturity. Trees will eat nails, wires, cables, signs, and fenceposts. Trees will even sprout and grow up through abandoned fence, machinery, or almost anything else. As the trees grow, they will slowly grow around any foreign object. Often, these deeply embedded objects cannot be detected when the tree is mature. Because these hidden objects can be very dangerous if they come into contact with a saw, it is not recommended to nail or fasten anything to a tree — The tree will eat it! Trees pictured in this booklet have embedded a sign and a fence post. The sign was obviously nailed to the tree, but the fencepost was placed too close to the tree’s trunk. These embedded objects cannot be safely removed. Over time, the trees will continue to “consume” the objects until the trees have completely embedded them inside the tree’s trunks.

—Jayson Waterman, District Forester



## **SYMPTOM: Unusual branching**

**DIAGNOSIS:** Unusual or abnormal branching is normally the result of some type or injury. If the top of a tree is damaged, the side branches closest to the point of damage will turn up towards the sky and establish dominance. In other instances, a lower branch may become damaged or distorted. If it continues to receive enough sunlight to maintain growth, it will continue to grow in its distorted condition. Early Indian tribes have been known to bend the branches of trees to permanently mark the location of trails.

Insects such as mites, fungi and dwarf mistletoe can all cause the over stimulation of dormant buds which results in the formation of dense mats of branches commonly called witches’ broom. And lastly, sometimes the genetics of a tree just go a little haywire and you get branching that is unusual. Many common ornamental varieties that are prized for their unusual appearance are the result of natural genetic mutation.

—Chuck Ratts, District Forester



**SYMPTOM: Multiple stems**

**DIAGNOSIS:** Some multi-stemmed trees can be explained as a result of phototropism. Plants are attracted to light. When a tree is knocked or blown over, the side branches feel the need for light and grow toward it. It has been said Indians used to do this on purpose to identify hunting spots, or to give them directions through a woods.

Other trees with multiple stems are a result of stump sprouts. When a tree is harvested, buds beneath the bark sprout as a survival tactic. Their chance of becoming new trees is dependent on the size of the original tree and their location on the stump. Those closest to the ground have a better chance. Most hardwood trees will produce sprouts. Usually they will total 2, 3 or 4 stems. Some very weird trees may have more sprouts that originate higher on the stump. My wife and I have 3 Stump sprouts named Michael, Steven, and Eric. Also a secondary sprout, Alexandra was recently born to Steven and his wife Erin.

—Don Stump, District Forester

**SYMPTOM: Warts, Bumps and Burls**

**DIAGNOSIS:** Teenagers and witches take heart. Mother Nature has cursed some things beside you with ugly bumps and warts. Trees have bumps, warts, and burls. The teenager fears the facial bumps before a date, the witch looks much more evil with warts on her nose and chin, and nothing disfigures a tree quite like an unexplained burl. The teenager grows past his problem, the witch is only imagined, but the tree remains ugly forever. Best of all we learn to love and appreciate things because of their differences from the norm.



Whenever people see a tree with unique bumps and burls the question is, "Boy, what caused that?" I continue to ask the same question and receive answers from, "I don't know." to "We think maybe...." Insects, damage to the bark,

viruses, and mutated growth buds have all been suspected. Maybe we should just accept this unique gift and not ask why.

We do know that inside these ugly, abnormal growths is some of the most interesting grain patterns found in any wood. These distinct woods are highly prized for tables, clocks, bowls, and other decorative products. Few of us can look at these beautiful things made possible by ugly without wondering why. I think I want it to remain a mystery. That way I can enjoy creating my own explanation for each one I find and realize the value of diversity.

—Rex Gambill, District Forester

**SYMPTOM: Crooked or misdirected trunk**

**DIAGNOSIS:** All plants grow upward, reaching for the sun! These examples of unusually growing trees provide a lesson in how persistent plants are in sticking to this rule. Each of these trees has experienced some physical damage. Perhaps a windstorm blew down another tree and it landed across this tree when it was much smaller. As side branches on that bent stem reached for light, they took over growth dominance. Many years later, these side branches now appear as the dominant stem(s) of the tree. Early Americans used this characteristic of trees to mark trails. A sapling bent over and tied down can be pointed in the direction of a trail. This growing trail marker will last for many years with no maintenance.

—Steve Marling, District Forester



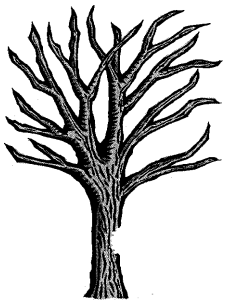


**SYMPTOM: Trees connected together**

**DIAGNOSIS:** What appear to be natural grafts between two trees or between two branches of the same tree are not that uncommon. Anyone who spends a lot of time in the woods has seen this phenomenon. How does it happen? Apparently as the trees grow in diameter extreme pressure builds at the point where a projecting limb contacts another tree or another part of the same tree. If both members are parts of the same tree then both are genetically identical and a true graft may occur. If there are two trees of the same species then the genetic similarity may allow a true graft. The artificial grafting of fruit trees and ornamentals is a routine procedure involving tissue from trees of the same species.

Where different species are involved a true graft would be far more difficult because of genetic incompatibility. What appears to be a true graft may be deceiving and there would be no way to know for sure without damaging the point of contact.

—Mike Coggeshall, District Forester



**SYMPTOM: Indentations**

**DIAGNOSIS:** Some indentations are caused by a canker, or fungus, which forms what appear to be “eyes” in the bark. The nectria canker can actually wrap completely around the tree and kill it, but usually only slows the growth of the tree. This fungus can be spread but is not commonly found in trees older than 20 years of age.

You may recall one tree with a person and dog inside it. Forest gnomes may exist according to this picture. This gargantuan tree, a sycamore, has hollowed out to form a large cavity within. Most likely, this tree has been periodically flooded a number of times and lies in low ground where water saturates the soil. This wetness can often cause decay from the inside out. An old injury from logs floating by in a flood or logging damage can also cause the tree to decay. Sometimes, coon hunters will “smoke out” a raccoon hiding within and the fire will burn out the center of the already hollow tree. Not a place I would want to be sheltered during a storm because the tree is probably the tallest thing in the woods and a prime target for lightning.

—Brad Rody, District Forester

**SYMPTOM: Gnarly Trees**

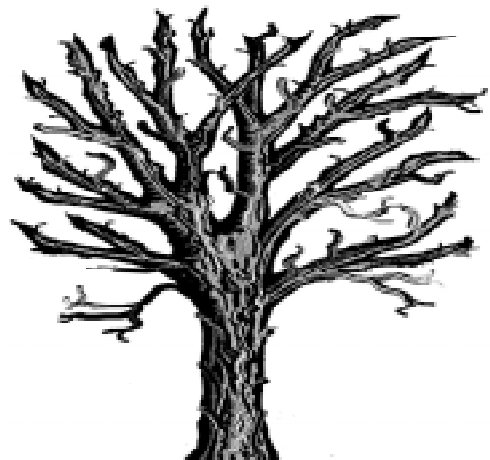
**DIAGNOSIS:**

I thought that I would never see  
A plant as gnarly as that tree,  
And what has caused it such distress  
To grow into such an ugly mess?

Could it be caused by site or genes  
Or dirt compacted by machines  
Which dig and fill to improve the land?  
It could be more than a tree could stand.

Or are they like the human race  
Which accompanies aging with a wrinkled face  
And twisted joints and stiffened limbs.  
Would they call us “old gnarly stems?”

—Steve Brandsasse, District Forester





# WARNING

We know there are more weird trees out there. We advise you to always take the following precautions:

1. Never go to the woods without a camera
2. Be sure to have plenty of film

**DO NOT BE CAUGHT IN THE WOODS UNPREPARED!**

